

Pacific Hub State TANF Directors Meeting Seattle, WA July 25-26 2001 Meeting Report:

Day One - Wednesday, July 25

- **Welcome:**

Vince Herberholt, Region X ACF and Dennis Winter, Region IX ACF, welcomed the participants to the conference. Vince provided the state representatives with a summary of the four purposes Heath and Human Services Secretary Tommy Thompson has highlighted as critical to welfare reform efforts:

1. Preparing every family for work;
2. Strengthening families;
3. Looking at what's behind the reductions in Foodstamp and Medicaid caseloads;
4. Working with families that have multiple barriers to employment.

- **State Needs and Interests:**

Debbie White, facilitator, asked the state representatives to provide their current hopes and expectations for the meeting, to supplement the planning done with states prior to the conference. A summary of state interests is attached.

- **National Perspective on Welfare Reform**

Jack Tweedie, National Conference of State Legislatures

Jack Tweedie, NCSL, provided participants with insights into the accomplishments during the last several years of welfare reform, as well as issues that are receiving national attention in light of approaching reauthorization discussions. Jack explained that prior to January, 1994, there had never been a period of time during which the AFDC caseload had declined nationally for six months in a row. Since January, 1994 the caseload has declined nationally every single month. Jack also summarized state leaver studies by noting that 55-60% of leavers typically are going to work, and most of these individuals are working at jobs in the \$6.50 - \$7.00/hr. range. Earnings are typically \$2,000 - \$3,000/per quarter, with \$3,000/per quarter about the range for families beginning to move above the poverty line.

There is concern that many eligible families are not accessing food stamps and Medicaid, with sharp drops in these caseloads across the country. While many families are leaving cash assistance, fewer than expected are accessing transitional benefits.

As caseloads have declined, states have reported a higher ratio of "harder-to-serve" families remaining on cash assistance than under AFDC. Jack noted that there is neither extensive, research-based data on successful program approaches for this client group, nor good information on what factors define this client group and how states segment this part of the caseload for services. He commented that he believes the challenge for states will be retargeting investments based on what works. As programs mature in their ability to effectively serve "harder-to-serve" clients, what works and what doesn't will become more evident.

Jack and the state representatives discussed time limits and the implications of the five-year limit for various Pacific Hub states. While he reports no sense that getting rid of the time limit is being considered, he feels there may be some discussion related to the 20% exemption to the limit, such as increasing the percentage of families that can receive cash assistance for more than sixty months.

In terms of caseload decline, Jack explained that he believes three factors have been responsible for driving most of the drop in cash assistance. He sees the economy as the most important factor, followed by the consistency and the urgency of the message that cash assistance is now a time limited benefit, and finally the impact of the services provided under TANF programs.

State representatives discussed some of the services and programs that have been implemented or planned to address the "harder-to-serve" segments of the caseload. It was agreed that states would benefit from more extensive data regarding what is working well in policy and program approaches.

Jack reviewed the program in New Mexico that allows the highest earnings rates after going to work of any state. He said that the New Mexico data suggest that there could be a benefit to states in extending the transition time, and the amount of public resources provided to a family, after a client goes to work and before closing the cash grant. In New Mexico, this approach seems to be diminishing the number of clients who leave and return to welfare, as well as increasing wages at the time of exit.

Jack reported that he believes the national conversation will focus on purposes three and four (relating to the prevention and reduction of out-of-wedlock pregnancies and to encouraging the formation of two-parent families), because purposes one and two (relating to assisting needy families so that children may be cared for in their own homes or the homes of relatives and to ending the dependence of needy families by promoting job preparation, work and marriage) are both perceived as being fulfilled in a satisfactory manner at this time.

Because discussions about public welfare and the welfare caseload have traditionally related to those on cash assistance, Jack suggested that the states will have to be ready to help shift the national discussion to the new realities of caseloads that now include only a small percentage of cash assistance families, and a large percentage of families receiving child care, food stamp, medical or other benefits in the absence of cash assistance.

There was discussion of a GAO report that will be out in August that will summarize work rates, job retention and earnings, and families returning to welfare.

Jack mentioned that there is a lack of recognition that TANF is more than AFDC. He summarized actions states can take to more effectively tell the story of welfare reform. For example, legislators and congressional Representatives can be invited to tour field offices. Jack offered to discuss specific questions or communications needs with state representatives as issues come up after the meeting.

- **Learning Disabilities – Bridges to Practice**

Dan Fey, Seattle-King County Workforce Development Council:

Dan Fey provided the states with a summary of current developments in learning disability services. He reminded states that studies show a high rate of learning difficulties in the TANF caseload, and summarized work in a variety of states related to this issue.

Dan described the service model being used in Seattle-King County, including the screening tool they have developed that is now being used in many areas of the country. He talked about "lessons learned" as the program has matured, and key elements that must be included in a successful program. He also mentioned that research shows a benefit in doing screening as soon as possible. Agencies need a clear process to work with LD that is easy to follow. His experience is that shorter focused assessment reports work better than long comprehensive ones.

State representatives learned that employer accommodations, screening, employment planning and collaboration on client plans may all be less costly in time and resources than has been traditionally assumed. Dan described how critical strong collaboration and communication between the learning disability professionals and the TANF case managers is to a successful program.

Dan provided materials about the program and state representatives from Alaska, Oregon, Washington, Arizona and Nevada talked about the extensive work being done in their states in this area.

Dan recommended the video "Fat City" by Rick LaVoie as a good tool to promote awareness of learning disability issues. He also advised TANF directors to work with the Disability Technical Assistance Center in their state.

States can also call the Job Accommodation Network, 1-800-526-7234 (janweb.icdi.wvu.edu/) for technical assistance related to the accommodations that may be required in particular situations.

- **Case Manager Role, Training and Retention**

Sue Christie, American Public Human Service Association

Sue Christie talked with state representatives about the "second wave" of change in welfare organizations, and how it impacts case management. She said that states must be very clear about what constitutes the case manager role, what constitutes success, whether processes to measure and reward are in place and whether the authority necessary is available at all levels.

As caseload dynamics have changed, it becomes more important for states to have mechanisms in place to deal with differences in the caseload and provide more individualized services. In many cases, data are too macro, and case managers do not have the information they need to differentiate their caseloads in timely and meaningful ways.

While systems have been working toward certain changes in case management duties for some time, in many cases neither human resources systems or first line supervision systems have been significantly adjusted to reward the hoped for changes. The traditional model in public welfare systems was one of production and equity - everyone was processed as efficiently as possible in a production model and everyone was to be processed as efficiently as possible, with everyone tending to be treated similarly. The emerging model is one of customization - everyone needs to be treated in the manner that will most effectively move the family toward self-sufficiency. This is a dramatic shift in perspective.

Sue and state representatives discussed whether current skill sets are appropriate for the case manager role and ways to accomplish the cultural change necessary to ensure that case managers and line supervisors are responding to the new work of welfare organizations. Discussion also centered on how multi-agency collaboration models have changed the role of case manager.

While many states are experiencing difficulty recruiting and retaining case managers, other states reported no significant problems. Sue noted examples of state and local responses to staff retention problems.

- **Caseload Dynamics and Time Limits:**

State representatives discussed how caseloads had changed over time, and the service delivery challenges being experienced as the ratio of "harder-to-serve" clients to the overall caseload had increased. The TANF directors summarized state responses to the coming five-year time limit, and plans being made to provide for clients who hit the time

limit. States with time limits less than five years, including Arizona and Nevada, shared their experiences and suggested that a far smaller number of clients reached the limit than what had been initially projected.

Day Two - Thursday, July 26

- **Announcement - Vince Herberholt**

Vince Herberholt announced that Dr. Wade Horn had just been confirmed as the new Assistant Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services. Vince explained that Dr. Horn had most recently been the founder and president of the National Fatherhood Initiative and had served as Commissioner for Children, Youth and Families under the previous Bush administration.

- **National Issues**

Ann Barbagallo, ACF/Office of Family Assistance

Ann Barbagallo, Senior Policy Advisor, provided states with a national perspective on welfare reform. She noted that in addition to Dr. Horn being named Assistant Secretary, Andrew Bush is expected to be the new Director of the Office of Family Assistance. Mr. Bush had previously worked for Jason Turner, providing policy and program analysis for New York City. In addition, he also worked at the Hudson Institute and for Wisconsin's W-2 program.

Ann reviewed the four purposes of TANF:

1. Assist needy families with temporary, basic support;
2. To promote work and marriage;
3. To prevent and reduce out-of-wedlock pregnancies;
4. To encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families

Ann explained that the new administration has expressed interest in focusing more attention on goals 3 and 4, related to family formation. Currently, she estimates that only about 1/2 of 1% of state MOE has been spent on either purpose 3 or purpose 4.

Programs related to Purpose 3 include abstinence education programs, visiting nurses programs, counseling for teen pregnancy prevention and after-school programs. Programs related to Purpose 4 include parenting skills training, pre-marital and marital counseling, mediation services, and job training and placement for initiatives to promote responsible fatherhood.

Ann talked about how the world has changed under welfare reform. Leaver studies are showing that people are generally better off working, though few are moving completely out of poverty. Challenges still remain related to post-employment supports, services for the working poor, and dealing with those who are still receiving cash assistance on the TANF caseload.

Ann explained that the needs of the remaining clients with multiple barriers who face time limits will be a challenge for states to meet. She indicated that much more experimentation and investment in program design strategies to address multiple barriers needs to occur given that:

- 30% of working population have a combination of a mental health diagnosis, or addiction to alcohol or drugs that require treatment or supportive services. 1/3 succeed in initial treatment, 1/3 require follow-up and 1/3 require ongoing treatment and support.
- 24-40% have learning disabilities. Dramatically under-diagnosed in women in educational systems because they don't act out their frustration in misbehavior.
- 15-20% of women receiving assistance, and an equal percentage of their percentage of their children have developmental disabilities.
- 15-20% of women are subject to domestic violence each year, with 60% subject to abuse over their lifetimes.

Ann explained Charitable Choice is a federal rule covering the expenditures of TANF, Welfare-to-Work and Community Services Block Grant funds. Charitable Choice encourages public officials to obtain services from faith-based groups, charities and other community groups. It requires government not to discriminate against faith-based organizations in contracting or voucher programs. Charitable Choice obligates government to respect the religious character of faith-based organizations, including their right to display religious symbols, use faith-based concepts and language and reserve the right to use religious criteria in hiring. Charitable Choice protects the rights of individuals not to be religiously coerced, and providers must serve all participants. Charitable choice calls for maintaining the separation of church and state, and specifically prohibits the use of federal funds for sectarian worship, instruction, or proselytization. However, it also seeks to assure that faith-based organizations that accept federal funds are not forced to suppress their religious character or forced to become secularized. It also seeks to remove inappropriate barriers to participation of faith-based organizations in federally funded programs.

Ann explained that the administration has not developed a position on reauthorization at this time. Andrew Bush, Director of the Office of Family Assistance, has indicated that he wants to be very attentive to state needs and concerns as they move into discussions of reauthorization.

Ann invited all the TANF directors to a September 4-6 conference in Washington, D.C. Secretary Thompson has been invited to address the conference, and the new political appointees will be attending.

- **Jose Rivera, President - Rivera, Sierra & Company, Inc.**

Jose Rivera presented a new perspective on approaching the "harder-to-serve" population. His presentation is summarized on the attached power point materials. Mr. Rivera and state representatives discussed the challenges of serving the remaining clients on the caseload, and the need for new approaches. Mr. Rivera provided examples of areas in which he is helping programs implement new approaches.

- **Wrap-up and Evaluation**

State representatives made commitments regarding forwarding information to other participants about various programs and services that had been identified as of interest during the meeting.

Evaluation indicated that the states preferred to continue joint Region IX and X meetings in the future. The suggestion was made to have any state information requested and compiled prior to the meeting. Participants indicated that the needs and interests identified during planning sessions and on the first day of the meeting were met. Appreciation was given to the presenters who had provided such good information to the TANF directors during the meeting.

Participant Responses - TANF Directors Meeting

What is most important to you to get from this conference?

Caseload contains a higher percentage of harder-to-serve clients. Case management system in TANF does not seem well matched to emerging needs.

1. How to engage working poor in high volume wage progression activities.
2. Mental health, substance abuse and domestic violence issues. Issues of well-paying jobs and job retention.
3. Participation rates - disconnect between activities/rates and remaining caseload. Does this call for redefinition of countable activities.
4. Getting, keeping and moving up in jobs for all segments of caseload.
5. Shifting role of Federal government from teller to listener.
6. Demands of labor market don't fit with circumstances of people on caseload. Folks who are already stressed/almost maxed out by issues/job on top of all other issues can push them over the edge.
7. Work1st and strengths model and screen for barriers and deal with participation rates - hard to find right balances/approaches.
8. Off-hour, infant, special needs child care - goals of TANF and goals of CCDF
9. Food Stamp Error Rates tension
10. Time limits - what next?
11. Child Support
12. What should state safety net after time limits look like?
13. Money Issues - Child Care - What to Sustain, what to let go/ how to tell?
Performance data/outcomes.
14. Caseload increases
15. Case management/organizational capacity.

Final Agenda
Region IX and X TANF Directors Meeting
Wednesday, July 25 - Thursday, July 26
2201 Sixth Avenue, Room 1010
Seattle, Washington
(206) 615 - 2569

Wednesday, July 25

8:30 - 9:00

Welcome

Dennis Winter, Associate Director
Pacific Hub
Vince Herberholt, Associate Regional
Administrator, Region X

Overview/Housekeeping

9:00 - 9:45

State Representatives Introductions

9:45 - 10:15

National Perspective on Welfare Reform

Jack Tweedie, Director
Children and Families Programs,
National Conference of State Legislatures

10:15 - 10:30

Break

10:30 - 11:45

**State Discussion with Jack on national
issues**

11:45 - 1:00

Lunch - State representatives may choose
lunch on their own, or to join a group
including state, ACF and resource people for
a lunch discussion.

1:00 - 1:45

**State Discussion - Building on key themes
from the morning, states will have the
opportunity to share more state-to-state
promising practices and lessons learned.**

1:45 - 2:15	Learning Disabilities -Bridges to Practice Dan Fey, Strategic Initiative Manager Seattle-King County Workforce Development Council Learning Disabilities Discussion with States
2:15 - 2:30	Break
2:30 - 3:15	Case Manager Role, Training and Retention Sue Christie, American Public Human Service Association
3:15 - 4:00	State Discussion - Caseload dynamics and time limit decisions
4:00 - 4:30	Discussion - Prioritized remaining issues/concerns

Thursday, July 26

8:30 - 9:00	National Issues Ann Barbagallo, Senior Policy Advisor ACF/Office of Family Assistance, Washington, D.C.
9:00 - 9:15	Identification of State Resources
9:15 - 11:45	Substance Abuse, Domestic Violence, & Employability Jose Rivera, President Rivera, Sierra, and Company
11:45 - 12:00	Wrap Up/Evaluation
12:00 - 1:00	Optional - Lunch with other states

**PACIFIC HUB STATE TANF DIRECTORS MEETING
PRESENTERS LIST
Seattle, WA July 25-26, 2001**

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Jose Rivera (718) 858-0066	Rivera, Sierra & Company Inc. jrivera@rivera-associates.com (www.rivera-associates.com)
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PACIFIC HUB STATE TANF DIRECTORS MEETING PARTICIPANTS
Seattle, WA July 25 – 26, 2001

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